BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08631 562 7

No. 7551.132

GIVEN BY

Gen. Charles G. Loring.

Congregational Freedom.

A DISCOURSE,

7551.132

AFTER THIRTY YEARS' MINISTRY, PREACHED IN THE WEST CHURCH,

BY C. A. BARTOL,

MARCH 3, 1867,

WITH SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARISH, MARCH 10.

BOSTON:
PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY.
1867.

Congregational Freedom.

A DISCOURSE,

7551.132

AFTER THIRTY YEARS' MINISTRY, PREACHED IN THE WEST CHURCH,

BY C. A. BARTOL,

MARCH 3, 1867,

WITH SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARISH, MARCH 10.

BOSTON:
PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY.
1867.

Sup - Ms. 10 in 7441.60
" 8 " 5470.18

Yours Charles G. Loring
June 13, 1898.

PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

DISCOURSE.

"*Your Servant.*"—2 Cor. iv. 5.

This was no compliment like a common-place greeting in the street, or handsome turn at the end of a letter. Service is the Christian word. Ministry is the name of our order. This is no gratuitous charity, for a stock of merit. Every religious soul is in pledge and pawn, in bond and mortgage, to pay all it is or has for the race it is born of. Its birthright, birth-mark and title of nobility is to further every righteous cause. Through concentric rings of home and country, into the great circle of humanity, such service spreads.

Shall I dare *so* to say, your servant? At least I feel something to be served, to which my poor individuality from the outset is so due, that no thanks to me for anything I have done are more appropriate than to the debtor, who at the counter cancels his bill. Greek or barbarian, Cretan or African, has his share in every one of us. Each one is part, and any one a splinter if he tears himself away. He not only glitters, but wounds. We serve all by fidelity in our particular sphere. My lot has been here. More than aught besides in my mortal span has been to me this West Church. Like man and wife in the marriage ceremony, I have through successive generations of children, identified myself with it "for better or worse." But what is the West Church? Here before me? But the least part of it! As "Talbot" says in the play, "Your roof could not contain it." No quorum is possible on earth of its members.

More unseen is it than seen, more in heaven than in time, more dispersed on the globe than within these walls. Like an animated frame it loses and gains particles from year to year. It appears in what a small minority of its representatives now! Yet you stand for it. I must address you as itself. Every worshipper here is chosen to office by its vast constituency, and bound by solemn entail of moral property and duty to cast the vote of his faith and behavior in a way worthy of the mostly angelic band he has joined. Not blood from the ground but voices from the sky adjure you to be loyal to its constitution.

What is such loyalty? It is to keep this Church unfettered as it was constituted at first. Judging by its past ministers, it yields to none in its freedom, from the time, when, just a century before my settlement, seventeen persons first formed it, and sent out for beams and timbers, perhaps into forests not far off, to make their modest tabernacle. Why did William Hooper, for whom the Society was gathered, nine years after his ordination, so suddenly leave the ground? Because the liberality of his doctrine of God's mercy was counted heresy, not by his people, who universally lamented his departure, but by the clerical brotherhood, — a many-headed Pope, from which as a hydra he fled. In Hooper's successor, Jonathan Mayhew, how this liberty of prophesying flamed still more; so that, the new-fledged but undaunted minister's rejection of Calvinism having got into the neighboring air, only two of the brethren, first invited, came to the council for his induction! But by this coolness nothing cowed, the man, who no more than John Knox feared face of mortal man, kept blowing his trumpet in reply to the murderous shot from the Jericho of tyranny and superstition joined in one, till the walls of shame tumbled down. So he was reckoned in the immortal band of the deliverers both of the American Church and State; and sharing the political glory of Otis and Adams, has round his head a religious halo all his own. How proceeded the meek Simeon

Howard but to keep the courage of his predecessors, like an infinitely-prized and jealously-guarded heir-loom, still busily at work, weaving the new pattern of transatlantic civilization, whose delicate threads despotism was ever stretching out its long, wilful and cruel fingers to break. What was Howard's pulpit? Before the age of telegraphs, a terminus of intelligence, with a wire running into the handsome steeple, which the British troops tore down on suspicion of its giving signals to the Continental troops in Cambridge. When the blast of war for a while bent all before it, what did he do but ferry part of the flock, as a floating Bethel, across the stormy Bay of Fundy, sailing back as soon as possible, by his self-sacrifice to build up the consumptive and well-nigh expiring remnant of the worshipping body into one of the most prosperous and powerful societies of the town? What did the same hereditary temper of emancipation from party-bonds into a Christian and cosmopolitan privilege find in Charles Lowell, but its climax; so that, spite of the goodness in him for which his very name was a proverb, he bore some odium on either side for inflexibly refusing to take a sectarian stand? I well remember his oft-repeated anxious charge to me when I was first his colleague, which became an injunction when he went to Europe, to do nothing to entangle the Church with any denomination.

Unworthy as is my name in any other respect to add to such a roll of honor, may I not claim to have been true to this genius of the West Church, as shown in its ministers, and never latent in itself, for the widest possible communion with other churches, but dogmatic organization with none? When, nearly two years ago, in a general roll-call reverberating over the land, we were invited to send to a Unitarian Convention delegates, authorized to represent our convictions, with pledges of respect to the decisions of the body, Unitarian however you or I might be, what was my duty as a sentinel but to warn you against yielding your Congregational rights? The call to us was laid on the table

without a voice in its favor. If this was at all out of regard for my judgment, I thank you. I congratulate you no less. If the well-meant summons had by courtesy any hold on others, what authority, coming from a few however honorable volunteers, had it for any? What possible warrant for us? Disinterested as was doubtless the aim, what commission to show had a handful of persons, what herald's credentials to reconstruct, on any verbal platform thrown up extemporaneously, at the instant of a swarm round the hive, a band of Christian believers who never owned such a confession? Yet, like a lever to its fulcrum skilfully adjusted, the project pried upon the universal Unitarian consciousness how strongly, so that wherever a local church fell not obediently in with it, a painful question was started among the members, or between them and their pastor, so urgent as in some cases seriously to disturb, and as a mischief almost unseat a before trusted guide. Our love was strong enough to resist the purchase. Do I brand as evil this drum-beat of the host of the Unitarian Israel from their tents? No; denominations, like military regiments, have still a work to do. But in the new army our history and position did not allow us to drill. In ancestral repugnance and ideal opposition, wishing no fight with trainers pursuing our objects in a different way, we simply remained where we were; though we were told, as with a prick behind of the bayonet into the ranks, those who stood aloof would be crushed. That ugly word was flung at us, *secession*, to imply a religious obloquy matching the political horror it had gathered from four fearful years of civil war. Yet, if any have seceded, who but abandoners of the old ground of unlimited inquiry for intellectual progress, to halt on an article in a preamble, which, as one black ball excludes from some fellowships, a single challenge should have sufficed to set aside? What is the passing of dogmatic propositions by the preponderate number happening in a conclave to be in attendance, but counter to reason as much as to the custom of a liberal faith? Any

chance electors can whistle up a theology quick enough so. Was Christianity determined in Christ's precepts and teachings by a vote? No; but by a divine contagion catching through the world's atmosphere.

Yet I am no blamer of whoever can agree so to act, if they will let others alone. A marshalling of forces round fixed opinions has been one providential method of human advance. A forward march in a special direction, at the word of command, may be best for all who are content with the blazonry of the new banner which their leaders, with industry like the late patriotic needlework for our flag, and designs of unquestionable zeal and candor, have presented. But, while this goes on, shall nothing else go on? Deplorable indeed, were this the only movement in the name of humanity and God! The crying need of the age, from its intelligence and piety alike, is for a motion which has no final position to state, no single idol of a prophet to set up; but is blown on across this Atlantic of our life, by the boundless spirit, to find more rest in the voyage than in any anchorage; as Columbus, the "brave world-seeking Genoese," had more peace on his way through the waves than when, with his grating keel, his heart too chafed on the shore. So, independent churches, like this, have an office and place. Mournful satire, that the very word *free-thinker* should signify the opprobrium instead of the glory of the human mind! What concerns me to say, but that an element of free thought has been so the breath of life to this society, it could without it scarce long survive! I therefore wheel into line with my forerunners. As to secession, let majorities remember there is such a thing as secession, not from a party but from a principle!

But an important question arises here. Has this Church, for being thus independent, been also impotent? Never, I reply! What church did more, a century ago, to deliver the land from the domination of the English Establishment and the British Crown, or has better claim to be called revolutionary? What

church has stood stronger, as a congregation, to turn religion from a black art and an aristocratic grant to a democratic right and republican privilege? What modern clergyman has more touched the common heart with his catholic temper and loving fellowship than that same Charles Lowell? so that it was said, if it were asked whom the whole people would choose to serve them on any occasion, his would be the first name to spring to their lips! Yet he declared, nearly fifty years ago, that "this Church, though alone, would assert its right to conduct its own affairs at its own discretion, and not be subject to the control of any other body, — no not for an hour."

Is it immodest for me to ask, Has the Church, since Lowell's day, been wanting to the community? In the last trial, than which on any nation a greater never rose, did it falter? Let the facts answer! We sent more than seventy men, our hostages of liberty and justice, to the dread ordeal whose fire blazed athwart a continent, to be decimated once and again on the fatal field, and return only their ashes, or in coffins with shut lids their ghastly decay, from spots whence their souls went, beyond corruption, to glory; till yonder granite steps, you passed up so pleasantly this morning, took to my eyes the color of blood whenever I walked over them. So copious and constant from these seats flowed the stream of life in new recruits to the front for a fresh sacrifice, that I was, in some outside quarters, held responsible through the tone of my preaching for the excessive offering, and solemnly assured I was demoralizing my people. You did not say so! They did not say so! Nor, though bereft, and the flower of our youth cut off, as at Gilboa, do we now look or were we ever demoralized! None in these United States, saved by the North and West which alone remained of the United States, were demoralized but those who, like cowards in an engagement, skulked and ran from that duty of the hour, grander than of our fathers in Valley Forge or on Bunker Hill. No Christian society, more than a Christian

man, will ever perish of self-devotion. The breath of dying heroes and martyrs passes through all the distance, hundreds of miles, from their last slipping foothold below, into the nostrils of those they represent, to revive their constituency and multiply their kin. Green grows the grass over their sundered graves! Into what new zeal, in such work for country and mankind as comes to hand for us, flourishes the memory of their faith and courage! We feed the enemies they had to slay.

By the jealous self-government, refusing to be manipulated and organized by foreign policy of an alien force, you have not therefore been disabled for any magnanimous task. Contributing abundantly to the ministry-at-large in this city, to the support of teachers for the Freedmen, to the spread of liberal ideas by book or living voice at the South or West, and doing ten-fold more with your individual right hands, in Christian ignorance of the left, than by any formal concert or boasting published schedule of your charities, I maintain you have not slunk from your full philanthropic proportion, under any cover of your undenominational shield. So, without scruple I say, in temper unsubmissive to dictation, unreserved in their several theological opinions, as they always have been, may these worshippers ever be!

But are you not Unitarians, we are asked. In any designation of belief there is a distinction, how many are ignorantly or stubbornly blind to, between the doctrine and the sect. I am a Unitarian in doctrine; I do not belong to a Unitarian sect, shaped one way to-day, re-shaped another to-morrow. In Boston, and as I suppose in all America, though it is a disputed point, this is the oldest Unitarian Church. Yet it has never joined any Unitarian Conference or Consociation. It has accepted no definition of combined counsellors or religious doctors. It has been obsequious to no fugle-men, here or elsewhere, sounding their horns to announce its convictions. It will never be so, till its ancient charm, its hereditary glory, its

clear path and endless opportunity, are gone. "Ichabod," then, if nowhere else, would be written on these walls. As to Unity and Trinity, we are so decided we want to hear no more about it. That issue is past. It no longer lives, apart from ecclesiastics and doctrinarians, in reflecting minds. Science explodes it. Scripture gives it no ground. We not only *hold*, we run against the divine unity, whatever track, matter or spirit, we take. The common Trinitarian conception I have no capacity for. Every fibre of my flesh, every drop in my veins is Unitarian. Let the Trinity alone and it will die, as the discussion about it is already dead. A spent swimmer, how it floats off further and further, to sink in the tide of thought! Three persons in one God, who is person too, else no object of prayer or love. It strikes no harmonious chord of the mind. This confused and jarring note, which has made the discord of Christendom for ages, is drowned past resuscitation in that resounding harmony of God's attributes, which to the soul's cultivated ear fills the universe with rippling music, and makes one orchestra of all his works. The question for us is so settled, its interest has ceased. Other issues press. The point now is if God be with us; or we must ask some other man or prophet to let us speak to him. Alas! the point with some is, not if God be threefold, but if he *be*. Materialism defies spiritualism to mortal fight. A God at all, in these days of science, must be universal, not local in any Pagan or Jewish sense. Bird or flower, as well as human mediator and wonder-working ambassador, are his mouth-piece and shrine. The song in the woods, better for being unmixed with human argument or special plea, announces him. The blossoms, blown in the wind, are his swinging censers. The rock tells us we can lean on him; the spring, gushing from its cleft, that he satisfies the thirsty soul; and the leaf, that nods over or quivers beside it, that he is not all rock or torrent, but tender pity and compassion too. Beyond the book or form, the miracle or man, his

revelations run. All other Saviour, seer or saint, is imperfect before Him. So Jesus in substance declares: "Compared with my Father, I am nothing, neither strong, nor wise, nor good: I am but a way to him. My word will help you; but pray and hear to that ear and voice which are yours as much as mine."

For God is the soul's assumption. I ask of Him no demonstration. You tell me, O naturalist, to be patient; that you are on the hunt after him, and will let me know by and by, whether he exists or not. I cannot wait for your experiment. I want Him now. When my friend expires on his bed; when I am sent for to speak over the coffin; when the dear boy, son or brother leaves his life, a spot of gory wet in the trampled clay of the battle-field, what care I, how can I stop to consider, whether your animated atoms, minute dots and cunning cells manifest God, or are void, as some of you say, of any sign of his being? I feel Him in my heart, in a way that beating heart, though under your probe or microscope, could never show. I do not believe in him because I believe in the bible and prophet; I believe in bible and prophet because I believe in him. If he be, all literary records however sacred are but his inferior tokens. If he is not, they have no worth; and their authenticity wins me only for the author of authors, ever conscious to my thought.

From all minor stays I am driven to this supreme trust. How can I be certain that I have, in every case, the words of Jesus himself? Some on the page, that I read as his, so trouble me, I ask if he has not been misrepresented or misunderstood. Did he say that all who ever came before him to teach in God's name were thieves and robbers? that there was a sin, even the Pharisees had committed, whose forgiveness was forever impossible? that those dying impenitent would plunge in torment of which eternity is the bottomless gulf? From such inquiries my refuge is the spirit better than any man, yet worse than any

monster were such teachings true, so wrongly imputed to the meek and lowly one. Infinite grace is capable of no such revenge. I preach access to it immediately, or through whatever medium, as the only infallible light.

Yet for this, coupled with a doubt of the last basis of Unitarian organization, I am hung in printed effigy all over the land for my selfish individualism, my failing mental equilibrium, and my pretended first discovery and original proclamation of the Holy Ghost. Into such charges malice instils no drop. They are honest and kindly rebuffs of my word. Yet, as any one of these faults would disqualify me for your service, I can only, with poor Desdemona, ask you, "Am I that name?" Is my character, for these thirty years, self-engrossment, lost wit, or unbounded conceit? Pardon my asking, as never before. Alas! I feel as if I might be cast in my suit after all. I cannot get my witnesses into court!

'Tis an old and forgotten affair. It tries to unlock evidence from a fading register of a past breed of men. It knocks at hundreds of tombstones, with only a hollow sound for reply.

I look round upon you in these seats, and see the great majority recent acquaintance. What have you to say of my manner of life? How can I expect you to testify in my favor? Would it not rather be your duty, with whatever pain, to investigate the charge, lying as I do, under a cloud, from Boston to St. Louis? So far as you observe my wish to be your servant and God's, you will doubtless be disposed not to hurry, but let the indictment sleep. Then I will refer it from your trial to thousands no writ can reach, long since privy to my habitual walk. They know how far sympathy with the needy, sad and sick, ready to give up the ghost, has been devoured in my bosom by this insatiable self. They may remember how much pavement my feet, on errands of consolation, however vain, have worn out. They might tell you how many thresholds, that I cannot count myself, where dark angels had preceded, I have

crossed, in hope at least to lighten the gloom. If my step has slackened with increasing years and diminished strength, they are aware if, with stricter economy, I have been able to accomplish as much. Indulge me in the momentary strain, so unusual and unlikely to recur. I know not how I could bear an impression that my life, now mostly gone, has not been in fellowship with my flock and my kind. Why this singular personality? Not for defence, from the smallest resentment, or to put myself right at the bar: I only tell it as part of the story, for whatever it may have of historic value. I have received no stab. I feel no inward wound. I am at peace. I never supposed, in the sincerely politic comprehensive repugnance to my position, the least hostile intent to myself. It does not exist. They are my well-wishers, whose reluctant hand of conscious justice strikes the unwilling blow. I bid them God-speed in their benignant plans, while I feel bound to modify their ideas in my little sphere. Resisting, we do not thwart each other. Ships, sailing directly apart in the same breeze, accomplish the ends of navigation alike. Heavenly bodies, crossing each other's track, maintain the order of the universe. The progress of mankind is by a resultant of forces in the moral world. Optimism and effort, freely yoked, agree.

To my censors I own, that on man's filial right with God I stand; and though to assert it is thought to detract from Christ, it is his only and surpassing glory to have disclosed and made it good. If he had no more than a filial right, he taught we have as much. Transcendent as was the degree of his honor, to whoever declares a different *kind* in his nature, I must reply, just so far we are out of reach of his faintest touch. His real power is in his spiritual likeness. What are his pre-existence, miraculous birth, bodily ascension, if true, but matters of physics and outward circumstance, while his character is the top of his claim? The supernatural marvels of his career I see no competency in science and criticism to assail. I believe in his

wondrous healings, and reappearance to his disciples' sight. Yet his grandest posture to me is not in the cloudy air, but working mercy on the common ground; even as Raphael, with artist instinct, painting the Transfiguration, draws the figures of needy human creatures crowding the foot of the mountain, to divert our look from Moses and Elias floating in celestial splendor on high.

Shall I say, my friends, that this mode of preaching, however emphasized by recent controversy, is with me no new thing; though if it has not been clear to you in time past, I wish my favor with you to depend on it in time to come. I have been your servant for a longer term than that of my predecessor, before he asked for help. Yet the suggestion of aught but continuance in a tie, that cannot be dissolved by the freedom with which it was knit, were both a pain and a wrong. How we could part I know not. Let me only pray to be more fit, for this dear relation. I will not think to instruct, but sit at the feet of whoever appreciates the Master more than I. But my only adoring goes to that back-ground of all being, of whose live immensity even Christ's world-redeeming history is but a trace on the sands of time. To the Infinite what more is Jesus than you or I? The star Sirius is no nearer than our little moon to the top of the sky. In God's investment in us, greater than ours in ourselves, is our surpassing hope. Shall I survive my dissolving frame? I humbly say, it is his sublime lookout more than mine! I am grateful for reports of Judæan resurrections, and for every present token of triumph over death. I put my life in his hand, believing he will not clutch, or cast it away, but hold tenderly the winged thing he made, and put it back in mine; and with it, lives dearer to me than my own. Accepting no fancy offered me as ultimate, and no article as fixed, I open, and pray Him to anoint, the eyes of my inquiry for brighter sight.

But why detain you? What explanation or apology from me do you need? I have had with you liberty to think and speak.

This pulpit has been free; these pews as well. In perilous times, with the political and religious foundations broken up, you have never restricted me, when I said words, with which you might be offended or grieved. How I am amazed that I have been so stood by! You, who perchance in anything disagreed with me, did not desert me. I thank you! If I am proud at all, it is of my congregation. To say nothing of its incomparable generosity, there is none more quiet, attentive, devout, absorbed in the object for which it meets. This is not alone my perhaps partial testimony, but that of scores of strangers coming but occasionally to this desk or these seats. What signifies that you do not adopt any of my views? The condition of your satisfaction is no easy echo of your servant's words. It is no monotonous response to each other. It is an atmosphere that starts your spiritual life; as under the same elements of sun, wind and rain, flourish the most diverse growths of the garden and the field. The ever present, only perfect spirit and the soul's title to its approach make the air I breathe, the fire in my bones, the truth I pronounce. I am not its champion. I am its meanest henchman. Yet I can, at no challenge of its sufficiency, turn and flee. To no person or place can it be confined. To consecrate part is to desecrate the whole. For the sake of some little cathedral or conventicle, it is to unhallow the universe, and unsanctify God himself. Alien from him must not be even the bricks of our houses, or stones under our feet; as the bringer of good tidings had of old, beauty on the dust of his shoes. By his might the seamless garment of nature is not rent. His prodigies are never out of order. His most uncommon doings are not against or above, but in the stuff of things. I am your servant by being his. In this game of thoughts our progenitors began, and we play over to-day, I feel his hand take me up and set me down, when it pleases and where it lists, on the board. No compunctious query visits me as to the destiny of the ideas, which become dearer to me

when I am sick and weak, and by which I am used. I behold what is and is to be of their resistless march. Looking eastward, when sun or moon rises, you sometimes see the winds hurtle the clouds about the golden or silver orb. But, after an hour, you look again and notice its ascent up the fathomless vault has not by gust or vapor been delayed. Our humors are winds and clouds. With our differing judgments our mortal affections too often warp, or wax cold. But not his love! It is warmth itself. Cannot our regard for one another burn constant as its flame? To this question I believe your answer and mine will be the same.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE WEST BOSTON SOCIETY.

By request, a meeting of the Congregation was held in the Church on Sunday, March 10th, after the morning service. It was called to order by the clerk of the society, Horace H. Coolidge, Esq. Hon. Chas. G. Loring was called to the chair, and Mr. Coolidge acted as Secretary of the meeting.

After a statement by the Chairman of the object of the meeting, Mr. Frederick U. Tracy offered a series of Resolutions, prefaced by the following remarks:

Mr. Chairman, — After having been blessed for thirty years with the services of a Pastor, who has devoted his whole powers of soul and body to our well-being and spiritual welfare, "whose going out and coming in before this people" has been with a singleness of purpose and purity of walk, rarely seen in this earthly existence, it would seem necessary that we, as a Church, should in some manner recognize our obligations to him, and express our gratitude to our Heavenly Father for having so long preserved him to us. And, in these times of excitement in the religious denomination with which most of us sympathize, it is also well to re-assert that independence, which is traditional in this Society, and has characterized it from its foundation. For these reasons I beg leave to offer these resolutions for the consideration of the Society.

Whereas, thirty years have elapsed since the ordination of our beloved Pastor to the ministry in this Society, during which, as the colleague of our venerated Doctor Lowell, and since his retirement from active service, as the sole minister, he has discharged the duties of his arduous and sacred office with signal zeal, fidelity and ability: and has sustained the cherished independence and reputation of the Society as a worthy successor of the eminent men who have preceded him, — and a grateful recognition of his long, faithful and invaluable efforts, for the spiritual good of his people, is due alike in justice to him and ourselves;

Therefore, *Resolved*, That in memory of his faithful services to the living, and to the many whose beds of sickness and of death

he has soothed and cheered — we contemplate with profound gratitude and respect, the earnestness, affection, disinterestedness and piety with which he has uniformly discharged his ministerial and parochial duties; his never-failing sympathy in our joys and our griefs; and the spiritual elevation of the instructions by which he has sought to enlighten the path of duty on earth, and prepare us for Heaven. And that we can never cease to hold them in grateful remembrance.

2. *Resolved*, That we entirely sympathize with him in the sentiments and principles, avowed in his discourse on the last Sunday, concerning the independence of this Society, and its freedom from any entangling alliance with any other Churches or Association of Churches; a freedom characteristic of its past history, and which we hope may characterize it to the end. That, while recognizing the unquestionable right of individual members to entertain and express their opinions, whenever and wherever they may judge it to be expedient, and to join such Associations as inclination or a sense of Christian duty may prompt; and not questioning the propriety of union of the Society with others in works of private or public beneficence, we would nevertheless preserve it in its corporate capacity, and as a religious Association, free from all alliances or connection with others, which might imply, on their part, any right to prescribe, or influence its faith or duties, or to be accounted as the exponents of either.

3. *Resolved*, That a copy of these Resolutions, signed by the Chairman and Secretary of this meeting be transmitted to Doctor Bartol, and that the Corporation be requested to enter them upon its records.

A True Copy: CHARLES G. LORING, *Chairman.*
H. H. Coolidge, *Secretary.*

The Chairman, before putting the question on the adoption of the resolutions, made the following remarks:

Friends and Fellow Worshippers:

The recent announcement by our pastor, of the approach of the thirtieth anniversary of his ordination, must have fallen upon the ears of some few of you, as it certainly did upon mine, with surprise. To many indeed, and perhaps the much larger number, it

could awaken none, for that period of time embraces nearly the whole of your conscious intellectual being. But to the few of us who worshipped in the little wooden church which stood in the place now occupied by this building more than sixty years ago, — who remember the venerable Dr. Howard, and can recall Dr. Lowell in the freshness of his youth, and the vigor and fervor of his manhood; — who, shutting their eyes can people these seats with the forms of those who then occupied them, the thirty years of our pastor's ministry seem like a dream of the night, like a tale that is told.

Very few are here now who occupied these seats thirty years ago, and very few, who fill them now, will be here thirty years hence to tell the tale of this day. A little more than thirty years is the average of human life, — a generation is born and dies in that short period, as successive waves breaking on the shores of time. The old pass away, — manhood falls into the sere and yellow leaf of age, — the young attain to manhood, — infancy advances to youth, — and is followed by a fresh succession of the blossoms of love and hope. How sad were this if it were all, — but how elevating and inspiring is the conviction that it is but the progression of the mortal to the immortal, to reunion with those who have gone before, to be perfected with those who are to follow us.

But although the individual perishes, and becomes to human memory as if he never had been, society lives and flourishes in constantly renewed growth, as the grove or the forest continues seemingly unchanged, the patriarchs fading imperceptibly away, their places to be taken by the saplings in never ceasing annual succession.

The thirty years of manhood, from the time when one is considered as taking upon himself the responsibilities of society, to do his share in the work of the world, constitute the most efficient and decisive period of his life. They determine his will and his ability; set the seal upon his character, — test the measure of his strength, and generally decide his destiny for good or for evil in the influences of his being. They draw largely upon, if they do not, as not unfrequently happens, exhaust his best energies; and no fitter period therefore can be found for a revision of the work

he has done, and its appreciation by those in whose service they have been expended.

And, pausing now to look back upon the thirty years of our pastor's ministry, — how fair and how dear the record! How precious to us, and to how many who have departed, must ever be precious, the remembrances of these thirty years! Surely, if devotion to duty, in the highest sense of duty, — if piety in its most spiritual and inspiring form, — if warm and affectionate friendship and the tenderest sympathy in the joys and sufferings of the individuals under his charge, — if unwearied assiduity in all the details of public ministrations and parochial care, — and if pulpit teachings, which will go down to posterity as one of the prominent illustrations of the clerical literature and spiritual elevation of the day, can entitle any minister to the love and gratitude of his people, they are eminently due to him. And most opportunely and gladly therefore may we avail of this anniversary, unitedly and publicly to give expression to the sentiments which fill our hearts, by adopting the first resolution.

If all could unite with us in this tribute, who are now scattered in wide distances, but bearing in grateful remembrance the influences of his ministry, and all who have carried to a better world the fruits of it, (and may we not imagine their spiritual presence on such an occasion?) the number would be far too great for these walls, or those of any other house of earthly worship here to contain.

It has been said, and well said, that confidence is a plant of slow growth. But thirty years are time enough for it to come to maturity. That between pastor and people, which has signally characterized this Society in every preceding ministry, is no less conspicuous in this. Differences of opinion may, and indeed must occasionally take place between members of every religious society who think for themselves, and at times between some of them and their pastor, upon the vast, mysterious, and insoluble questions involved in any form of religious faith. And no man, nor woman, with a due sense of personal accountability and self-respect, could wish it to be otherwise. But such differences, held in a Christian temper, cannot weaken mutual confidence, or estrange long-cherished affec-

tion. They serve rather to strengthen both, in opportunity given for cultivation of the Christian graces of candor and forbearance. Such generous confidence has ever pervaded the relations of the people of this Society to each other and to their pastors. The tree has been growing, in the remembrance of some now living, not for thirty years only, but for more than sixty; and tradition assigns to it still greater age. Its roots have extended too far, and become entwined with the fibres of too many hearts of the living, and with too many sacred associations in remembrance of the departed, to allow it to be shaken by occasional diversities in speculative belief. They are merely the breeze sending its invigorating influences and rustling music through the leaves, — they cannot move the trunk. Some, who are not of us, seem, indeed, to have apprehended that the peace of our Society has been disturbed, or put at hazard by reason of some such differences. We are happy unitedly to assure them that there is no danger; that it is but a health-giving ripple on the surface; the depths are undisturbed.

Such differences are no novelty. It is well known that our late revered Senior Pastor entertained some speculative beliefs, in which many, if not a majority, of his parishioners did not participate. I well remember his avowal of them in this pulpit, as constrained by the literal interpretation of Scripture: in one of which, esteemed fundamental by our so-called orthodox friends, probably not one who now occupies a seat here believes. But what society ever venerated and loved its minister more than the West Boston Society venerated and loved Doctor Lowell; or what pastor ever loved the people of his charge more fervently, than did Doctor Lowell that of the West Boston Society?

A marked characteristic of this society, certainly for more than sixty years, and traditionally from its foundation, has been its independence of all associations or affiliation by which its faith or theological position could be influenced, or impliedly represented. This independence was always zealously vindicated by Dr. Lowell; was the settled policy of the Society at the induction of the present minister, and has been maintained by him with equal earnestness. He has, indeed, been recently somewhat assailed on this score, as manifesting "a selfish individualism," and there seems to

be in some quarters a disposition to hold him personally accountable for our isolation, as a church, from participation in some of the movements of the day. Nothing could be more unjust; and it is due alike to him and ourselves, that we assure him of our unqualified support in this position, and to publicly make known that in this he represents our sentiments and opinions no less than his own. And for these reasons it seems eminently proper that we adopt the second resolution.

Pardon me, my friends, for intruding so long upon your indulgence. But, as the eldest, or among the eldest of the few members surviving of families which worshipped here in the olden time,—who was baptized at this altar more than three score and ten years ago,—who has ever since humbly worshipped here,—who hopes to be buried from among you,—and who in all probability can never have opportunity again to speak to you upon these themes, or thus publicly to express his profound gratitude to our pastor for the friendly offices and spiritual aid of his ministry, I could not suffer it to pass without expression of the thoughts and feelings which the occasion has naturally excited.

The Resolutions were then unanimously adopted, and the Chairman and Secretary requested to forward a copy to the Pastor.

The meeting was then dissolved.

Boston, March 13, 1867.

Rev. and Dear Sir, —

It is our most acceptable duty to transmit to you a copy of Resolutions adopted with entire unanimity and great cordiality, at a meeting of the West Boston Society on Sunday last, in reference to the thirtieth anniversary of your ordination.

And, in so doing, permit us to assure you that none felt greater interest in the occasion, or feel more profoundly the sentiments embodied in the Resolutions, than

Your ever faithful friends and servants,

Charles G. Loring, *Chairman.*

H. H. Coolidge, *Secretary.*

Boston, March 15, 1867.

Gentlemen and Dear Friends, —

By nothing in my life have I been more deeply touched than by your note, and the Resolutions of the West Church, you transmit. My acknowledgments to you and the Society so blend with thanksgivings to Him, whose honor we seek in our relation, I cannot quite part the earthly from the heavenly gratitude. I have not mistaken the people I serve, in judging of their sentiments towards me by mine towards them. But the personal tribute to me is far beyond my desert. I can accept it only as the voice of a sincere affection, — not as an estimate, to which my well-meant, but ever short-coming efforts have no claim. The stand of the Parish for its own independence fills my heart with unspeakable joy, incomparably greater than I could taste from any honor done to myself.

In all love to you and those you represent,

C. A. BARTOL.

Charles G. Loring, H. H. Coolidge.